

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
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C O N F I D E N T I A L NEW DELHI 1106

EO 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, IN, BG
SUBJ: FARAKKA TALKS IN DELHI END WITHOUT AGREEMENT

1. THE FARAKKA TALKS IN NEW DELHI WERE CALLED OFF THE NIGHT OF JANUARY 22 WITHOUT ANY AGREEMENT BEING REACHED. NO DATE WAS SET FOR ANOTHER ROUND OF DISCUSSION. ACCORDING TO PRESS ACCOUNTS, A GOI SPOKESMAN SAID THAT BOTH SIDES MADE SINCERE EFFORTS BUT THAT IT WAS UNFORTUNATE THAT NO AGREEMENT COULD BE REACHED. THE DELEGATIONS REPORTEDLY HELD A PRELIMINARY MEETING AFTER THE BANGLADESH DELEGATION ARRIVED FRIDAY AFTERNOON, JANUARY 21, AND SPENT JANUARY 22 IN INFORMAL DISCUSSION AND "CONSULTATIONS WITH THEIR GOVERNMENTS." THE ONLY AGREEMENT REACHED AT A FORMAL MEETING LATE THAT NIGHT WAS TO END THIS ROUND OF TALKS. ONE PRESS ACCOUNT REPORTS THAT THE TALKS WERE ORIGINALLY SCHEDULED TO CONTINUE UNTIL JANUARY 25.

2. AT CALCUTTA AIRPORT ENROUTE TO DACCA JANUARY 23, REAR ADMIRAL M.H. KHAN WAS REPORTEDLY ASKED BY NEWSMEN IF THE ISSUE HAD REACHED THE POINT OF NO RETURN. ACCORDING TO "THE STATESMAN", KHAN REPLIED THAT "WE HAVE NO HESITATION TO SIT FOR ANY TALKS. BUT MERE TALKS ARE NOT ENOUGH. SOMETHING MORE IS NECESSARY
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BECAUSE THE DRY SEASON IS ALREADY ON IN BANGLADESH." ASKED IF THE BDG WOULD AGAIN APPROACH THE UN, KHAN REPORTEDLY SAID THAT HE COULD NOT COMMENT NOW AND WOULD REPORT THE OUTCOME OF THE TALKS TO HIS GOVERNMENT.

3. MEA JOINT SECRETARY (BANGLADESH) DUBE ESSENTIALLY REITERATED GOI SPOKESMAN'S STATEMENT TO POLCOUNSELOR IN

CONVERSATION TODAY. DUBE SAID THAT IN MORE HOPEFUL ROUND OF TALKS EARLIER IN JANUARY, GOI HAD VIRTUALLY IGNORED WEST BENGAL ENGINEERS. PRIOR TO LAST WEEKEND'S DISCUSSIONS, HOWEVER, THE PRIME MINISTER HAD CALLED WEST BENGAL CM S.S. RAY TO DELHI AND HE HAD STRONGLY INSISTED ON SERIOUS REPERCUSSIONS SHOULD WATER FLOW TO CALCUTTA BE DIMINISHED FURTHER. DUBE ACKNOWLEDGED THAT TIMING OF TALKS AFTER PM HAD DECIDED ON ELECTIONS DID NOT FACILITATE PROSPECTS FOR MORE GOI CONCESSIONS. HE NOTED, HOWEVER, THAT THE BANGLADESH SIDE HAD BEEN ABSOLUTELY INFLEXIBLE IN ITS OWN DEMANDS.

4. THE INDIAN SIDE HAD SUGGESTED A FURTHER ROUND OF TALKS LATER, BUT THERE HAD BEEN NO COMMITMENT BY ADMIRAL DHAN. DUBE PROFESSED, HOWEVER, TO HAVE BEEN SOMEWHAT RELIEVED BY CAREFUL AND RESTRAINED COMMENTS BY ADMIRAL KHAN BOTH IN CALCUTTA AND ON HIS ARRIVAL IN DACCA. AS PRACTICAL MATTER, DUBE SAID GOI WOULD TRY TO PROVIDE ABSOLUTE MAXIMUM AMOUNT OF WATER WHICH IT COULD TO BANGLADESH. ACTUAL AMOUNT WAS CURRENTLY UNDER EXAMINATION AND NO FINAL DECISION HAD BEEN MADE. IN ANY EVENT IT WOULD BE MORE THAN THE 50-50 DIVISION OFFERED BY GOI TO BANGLADESH IN SEPTEMBER 1976. THERE WAS NO PROGRESS WHATSOEVER ON LONGER-RANGE SOLUTIONS OF THE WATER PROBLEM AT THE JANUARY 21-22 TALKS.

5. ON THE BORDER TALKS SCHEDULED FOR JAN 27-28, DUBE AGAIN IMPLIED DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE MEA AND OTHER BRANCHES OF THE GOI. THE MEA'S POSITION WAS TO IMPROVE CONFIDENTIAL

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INDO-BANGLADESH RELATIONS; THERE WERE OTHERS, HOWEVER, WHO DISTRUSTED THE BDG AND WERE NOT SO ANXIOUS. FOR THIS REASON, THERE WAS A POSSIBILITY THAT MEA FOR THE FIRST TIME MIGHT SEND DUBE TO SIT IN ON THE FORTH-COMING ROUND OF BORDER TALKS. IN ALL EVENTS, PATIENCE WAS NECESSARY IN THESE THINGS, DUBE SAID, AND PROGRESS MIGHT BE MADE IN TWO OR THREE MORE MEETINGS.

6. DUBE WAS UNWILLING TO SPECULATE ON WHAT WOULD COME NEXT IN THE DISCUSSIONS BETWEEN DACCA AND NEW DELHI. HE SAW THE POSSIBILITY THAT BANGLADESH MIGHT PRESS ITS OUTSTANDING ISSUES AGAINST INDIA AT THE NACC FONMIN MEETING IN MARCH, BUT HOPED THIS COULD BE AVERTED. IT WAS IN THIS CONTEXT THAT HE NOTED THE RESTRAINED BANGLADESHI REACTION THUS FAR TO THE WATERS NEGOTIATIONS.
SCHNEIDER

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